

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSC-10 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 OMB-01 NIC-01 DRC-01

CAB-09 COME-00 EB-11 FAA-00 SCI-06 SCEM-02 INT-08

TRSE-00 /116 W

----- 107709

O 280545Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8965

INFO USLO PEKING IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL HONG KONG IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 16663

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR JA CH ETRN

SUBJECT: FONMIN OHIRA TO VISIT PEKING

SUMMARY: VICE FONMIN HOGEN INFORMED CHARGE FONMIN OHIRA WILL VISIT CHINA JAN 2-6 TO EXCHANGE VIEWS ON INTERNATIONAL AND BILATERAL MATTERS. ALTHOUGH AN AVIATION AGREEMENT IS STILL STALEMATED AND OHIRA HAS STATED HE WOULD NOT VISIT CHINA BEFORE AGREEMENT WAS REACHED, HE IS APPARENTLY GAMBLING ON REACHING A COMPROMISE SOLUTION DURING THE VISIT. OTHERWISE, THE GOJ WILL RISK SIGNIFICANT DOMESTIC CRITICISM FOR FAILURE TO ADVANCE RELATIONS WITH CHINA.
END SUMMARY

1. VICE FONMIN HOGEN CALLED THE CHARGE DEC 28 AM TO INFORM EMBASSY THAT FONMIN OHIRA, IN RESPONSE TO STANDING INVITATION OF PRC FONMIN CHI PENG-FEI, IS GOING TO THE PRC JAN 2, TO ARRIVE IN
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PEKING JAN 3, AND RETURN TO TOKYO JAN 6. HOGEN SAID THAT THE RECEN-

LY INITIALED JAPAN-PRC TRADE AGREEMENT WOULD BE SIGNED DURING THE VISIT. HE INDICATED THAT THE CIVIL AVIATION AGREEMENT NEGOTIATIONS WERE STILL STALEMATED ALTHOUGH THE AVIATION QUESTION WOULD CERTAINLY BE DISCUSSED DURING THE VISIT. PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE VISIT WAS MADE AT 1030 DEC 28. OHIRA WILL BE ACCOMPANEIED BY MOFA CHINA DIV HEAD KUNIHIO.

2. CHINA DIVISION (DEP HEAD OGURA) ALSO CALLED EMBOFF AND SAID THE VISIT SHOULD BE CHARACTERIZED AS OPPORTUNITY QTE TO EXCHANGE VIEWS ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES AND DISCUSS THE PROSPECTS FOR SINO-JAPANESE RELATIONS UNQTE (ALTHOUGH OGURA, AS HOGEN, SAID CIVIL AVIATION AGREEMENT WOULD NATURALLY BE DISCUSSED).

3. TOKYO SHIMBUN DEC 28 CARRIED SOLE PRESS STORY ON OHIRA VISIT, QTE BASED ON GOVERNMENT SOURCES UNQTE (PROBABLY CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY SUSUMU NIKAIKO), EMPHASIZING VISIT AS EFFORT TO ACHIEVE AN AVIATION AGREEMENT. ARTICLE SAID OHIRA WOULD REITERATE GOJ'S POSITION THAT AN AIRLINE AGREEMENT BETWEEN JAPAN AND CHINA WAS GOVERNMENTAL AND OFFICIAL, WHILE THE JAPAN-TAIWAN ROUTE WAS A PRIVATE ARRANGEMENT. AT SAME TIME, ACCORDING TO TOKYO SHIMBUN, OHIRA WOULD EMPHASIZE THAT JAPAN INTENDS TO SEPARATE CHINA'S AND TAIWAN'S PLANES AT DIFFERENT AIRPORTS AND REDUCE THE NUMBER OF FLIGHTS BY TAIWAN'S PLANES.

4. COMMENT: AT THIS POINT WE CAN ONLY SPECULATE ON WHY OHIRA DECIDED SUDDENLY TO VISIT PEKING AND WHY HE IS WILLING TO GO DESPITE HIS HAVING SAID ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS THAT HE WOULD NOT GO TO PEKING UNTIL AGREEMENT HAD ALREADY BEEN REACHED ON CIVIL AVIATION. AS FOR THE SUDDENNESS OF THE DECISION, WE RECEIVED HINTS OF THE VISIT ONLY YESTERDAY AND OGURA VOLUNTEERED RATHER POINTEDLY THAT THE VISIT WAS IN RESPONSE TO AN INVITATION FROM CHI PENG-FEI, ALL OF WHICH RAISES THE POSSIBILITY THAT OHIRA IS GOING TO PEKING AT THE RENEWDED URGING OF THE CHINESE, PERHAPS ACCOMPANED BY CHINESE SUGGESTIONS THAT A COM-PROMISE ON THE AVIATION AGREEMENT IS POSSIBLE. FROM THE JAPANESE SIDE, IT IS AWKWARD FOR OHIRA TO GO AFTER HAVING SAID THAT HE WOULD NOT

GO PRIOR TO REACHING AGREEMENT ON AVIATION AND THE GOJ RISKS AROUSING CONSIDERABLE CRITICISM IF THE VISIT ACHIEVES NO RESULTS, ESPECIALLY ON AVIATION. (OF COURSE, AN AGREEMENT SERIOUSLY DE-CONFIDENTIAL

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TRIMENTAL TO TAIWAN'S INTERESTS WOULD IRRITATE RIGHT-LEANING ELEMENTS OF LDP AND INCREASE DIFFICULTIES FOR GOJ LEADERSHIP IN DEALING WITH PRO-TAIWAN HAWKS.) THE DIET'S BEING IN RECESS UNTIL JAN 21 EASES SLIGHTLY THE PROBLEM OF DIET CRITICISM. FINALLY, OUR SPECULATION LEADS US TO SUSPECT THAT BECAUSE OF THE GOJ'S POLITICAL INTEREST IN ACHIEVING THE AVIATION AGREEMENT, AND OHIRA'S PERSONAL STAKE IN SINO-JAPANESE RELATIONS, HE HAS DECIDED TO GAMBLE ON HIS ABILITY TO CONVINCE THE CHINESE OF THE

ESSENTIAL REASONABLENESS OF JAPAN'S POSITION, PLAYING ON BOTH COUNTRIES' DESIRE TO BREAK THE AVIATION IMPASSE AND PROBABLY ON HINTS FROM THE CHINESE THAT A COMPROMISE IS NEGOTIABLE, IF BOTH SIDES HAVE MADE THE POLITICAL DECISION TO ADVANCE RELATIONS, COMPROMISES ON BOTH SIDES SHOULD PERMIT AGREEMENT.

5. DESPITE INTEREST IN AND THE SYMBOLIC AS WELL AS REAL IMPORTANCE OF THE AVIATION AGREEMENT, OTHER BILATERAL MATTERS MAY ALSO HAVE STIMULATED THE DECISION ON OHIRA'S TRIP. PROMINENT REASONS, STEMMING FROM THE OIL CRISIS, ARE: (1) JAPANESE CURTAILING OF EXPORTS TO CHINA OF, FOR EXAMPLE, STEEL AND FERTILIZER BY ESTIMATES RANGING AROUND 25 PERCENT, AND (2) HEIGHTENED JAPANESE INTEREST IN CHINA AS A SOURCE FOR ENERGY REQUIREMENT, INCLUDING THE PO HAI GULF PROJECT. THUS, A COMBINATION OF BILATERAL MATTERS, INCLUDING AVIATION, MAY SIMPLY HAVE OVERRIDDEN OHIRA'S EARLIER POSITION.

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